JOHN G. NEIHARDT, POET LAUREATE OF NEBRASKA

THE first official recognition of an American poet by a law-making body came during the recent session of the Legislature of Nebraska, when the Senate and the House passed a joint and concurrent resolution declaring John G. Neihardt, Poet Laureate of Nebraska. This official action by a great Western State was taken by way of recognizing the significance of the American Epic Cycle upon which Neihardt has been working steadily for seven years and of which "The Song of Hugh Glass" and "The Song of Three Friends" have now been published. "The Splendid Wayfaring" (Macmillan) is a prose work giving the historical background of these epics. Neihardt is now engaged in the third part of the cycle, to be called "The Song of the Indian Wars."

NEW BOOKS

Fiction.

DESERT VALLEY—By Jackson Gregory. Scribners.
QUEENIE: THE ADVENTURES OF A NICE YOUNG LADY—By Wilbur Finley Fauley. Macaulay.
GREEN APPLE HARVEST—By Sheila Kaye-Smith. Dutton.
THIS LITTLE WORLD—By Florence Olmstead. Scribners.
TOO OLD FOR DOLLS—By Anthony M. Ludovici. Putnam.
THE MAN-KILLER—By Dane Coolidge. Dutton.
TERRY: A TALE OF THE HILL PEOPLE—By Charles Goff Thomson. Macmillan.
THE MAN WHO DID THE RIGHT THING—By Sir Harry Johnston. Macmillan.
MAJESTY—By Louis Couperus. Dodd-Mead.
O. HENRY MEMORIAL AWARD PRIZE STORIES OF 1920—Chosen by the Society of Arts and Sciences. Doubleday-Page.
SAVAGES—By Gordon Ray Young. Doubleday-Page.
AN OCEAN TRAMP—By William McFee. Doubleday-Page.
THE SEEDS OF ENCHANTMENT—By Gilbert Frankau.
BAT WING—By Sax Rohmer. Doubleday-Page.

History and Public Affairs.

THROUGH WAR TO PEACE—By Albert G. Keller. Revised edition. Macmillan.
EARLY HISTORY OF NORTH DAKOTA: ESSENTIAL OUTLINES OF AMERICAN HISTORY—By Col. Clement A. Lounsberry. Washington D. C.: Liberty Press.
JAPAN AND THE CALIFORNIA PROBLEM—By T. Iyenaga and Kenoske Sato. Putnam.
THE PARTY OF THE THIRD PART: THE STORY OF THE KANSAS INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS COURT—By Henry J. Allen. Harpers.

Finance and Economics.

THE PUBLIC FINANCE OF MEXICO—By Walter Flavius McCaleb. Harpers.
AMERICAN ECONOMIC LIFE IN ITS CIVIC AND SOCIAL ASPECTS—By Henry Reed Burch. Macmillan.

Psychology.

HUMAN BEHAVIOR: IN RELATION TO THE STUDY OF EDUCATIONAL, SOCIAL AND ETHICAL PROBLEMS—By Stewart Paton. Scribners.

Vocational Training.

THE ENGINEER—By John Hays Hammond. Scribners.
THE TEACHER—By F. B. Pearson. Scribners.

Essays and Criticism.

DISCIPLINE AND THE DERELICT: Being a Series of Essays on Some of Those Who Tread the Green Carpet—By Thomas Arkle Clark. Macmillan.
NOTES OF LIFE AND LETTERS—By Joseph Conrad. Doubleday-Page.

Philosophy and Religion.

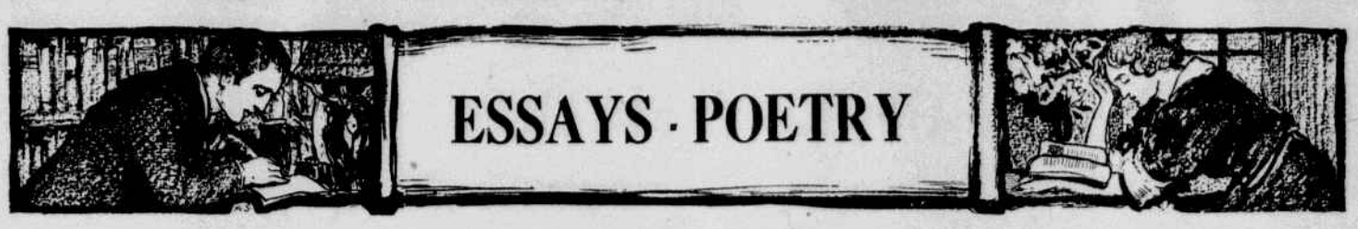
THOUGHT RELICS—By Rabindranath Tagore. Macmillan.

Agriculture.

RURAL NEW YORK—By Elmer O. Fippin. Macmillan.

Industry.

UNITED STATES STEEL: A CORPORATION WITH A SOUL—By Arundel Cotter. Doubleday-Page.



ESSAYS · POETRY

Conrad admires Fenimore Cooper

NOTES ON LIFE AND LETTERS. By Joseph Conrad. Doubleday, Page & Co.

THIS volume is made up of short pieces that might have been "pot-boilers." They appeared in all sorts of newspapers and magazines, and some of them deal with matters of passing interest. But all of them convey that conviction of character and conviction of beauty which are one in the man and artist Conrad.

He writes of things he cares about—literature, the sea, Poland. If he writes about himself—as the essayist is bound to do—it is never without reserve, never, as he says, in dressing gown and slippers:

"The only thing that will not be found amongst those Figures and Things that have passed away will be Conrad *en pantoufles*. It is constitutional inability. *Schlafrock und pantoffeln!* Not that! Never! . . . I don't know whether I dare boast like a certain South American general who used to say that no emergency of war or peace had ever found him 'with his boots off'; but I may say that whenever the various periodicals mentioned in this book called on me to come and blow the trumpet of personal opinions or strike the pensive lute that speaks of the past, I always tried to pull on my boots first. I didn't want to do it. God knows! Their Editors, to whom I beg to offer my thanks here, made me perform mainly by kindness, but partly by bribery. Well, yes! Bribery. What can you expect? I never pretended to be better than the people in the next street or even in the same street."

But he is in a very different mood of high-priestly seriousness when he writes of books:

"Of all the inanimate objects, of all men's creations, books are the nearest to us, for they contain our very thought, our ambitions, our indignations, our illusions, our fidelity to truth, and our persistent leaning toward error. But most of all they resemble us in their precarious hold on life. A bridge constructed according to the rules of the art of bridge building is certain of a long, honorable and useful career. But a book as good in its way as the bridge may perish obscurely on the very day of its birth. The art of their creators is not sufficient to give them more than a moment of life. Of the books born from the restlessness, the inspiration and the vanity of human minds, those that the Muses would love best die more than all others under the menace of an early death. Sometimes their defects will save them. Sometimes a book fair to see may—to use a lofty expression—have no individual soul. Obviously a book of that sort cannot die. It can only crumble into dust. But the best of books drawing sustenance from the sympathy and memory of men have lived on the brink of destruction, for men's memories are short and their sympathy is, we must admit, a very fluctuating, unprincipled emotion."

And though he writes well of Henry James, and Maupassant, there is a more enthusiastic note in this passage about an American author sometimes underestimated by his own countrymen—James Fenimore Cooper. Conrad has been speaking of Marryat and he goes on:

"At the same time, on the other side of the Atlantic, another man wrote of the sea with true artistic instinct. He is not invincibly young and heroic; he is mature and human, though for him also the stress of adventure and endeavour must end fatally in inheritance and marriage. For James Fenimore Cooper nature was not the framework, it was an essential part of existence. He could hear its voice, he could understand its silence, and he could interpret both for us in his prose with all that felicity and sureness of effect that belong to a poetical conception alone. His fame, as wide but less brilliant than that of his contemporary, rests mostly on a novel which is not of the sea. But he loved the sea and looked at it with consummate understanding. In his sea tales the sea interpenetrates with life; it is in a subtle way a factor in the problem of existence, and for all its greatness it is always in touch with the men who, bound on errands of war or gain, traverse its immense solitudes. His descriptions have the magistral ampleness of a gesture indicating the sweep of a vast horizon. They embrace the colours of sunset, the peace of starlight, the aspects of calm and storm, the great loneliness of the waters, the stillness of watchful coasts, and the alert readiness which marks men who live face to face with the promise and the menace of the sea. He knows men and he knows the sea. His method may be often faulty, but his art is genuine. The truth is within him."

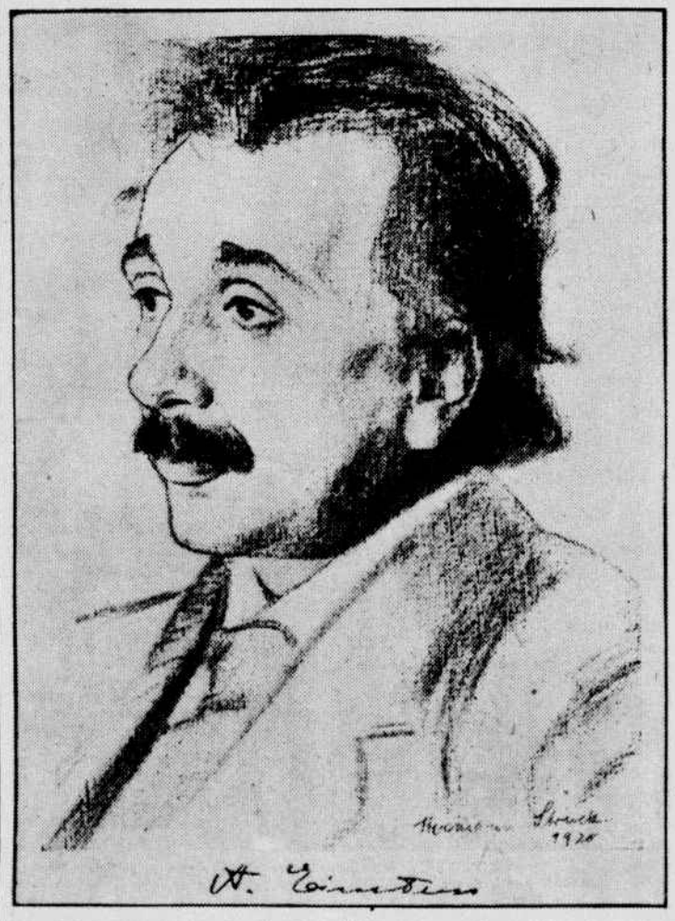
"He wrote before the great American language was born," says Conrad of Cooper. So we have a language of our own, on the authority of one who knows what language ought to be.

There are pieces born of the war, but too good to pass with it. They deal chiefly with the work of England's navy and merchant marine. That is Conrad the Englishman. The voice of Conrad the Pole is heard in a passage like this:

"When the war broke out there was something gruesomely comic in the proclamations of emperors and archdukes appealing to that invincible soul of a nation whose existence or moral worth they had been so arrogantly denying for more than a century. Perhaps in the whole record of human transactions there have never been performances so brazen and so vile as the manifestos of the German Emperor and the Grand Duke Nicholas of Russia; and, I imagine, no more bitter insult has been offered to human heart and intelligence than the way in which those proclamations were flung into the face of historical truth. It was like a scene in a cynical and sinister farce, the absurdity of which became in some sort unfathomable by the reflection that nobody in the world could possibly be so abjectly stupid as to be deceived for a single moment. At that time, and for the first two months of the war, I happened to be in Poland, and I remember perfectly well that, when those precious documents came out, the confidence in the moral turpitude of mankind they implied did not even raise a scornful smile on the lips of men whose most sacred feelings and dignity they outraged. They did not deign to waste their contempt on them."

A book of quality, to be felt in every paragraph. The craftsmanship is like that of the novels, but even those who find Conrad's fiction hard to get into may be won by these essays, brief, direct, sincere.

Dr. Einstein's wartime protest



ONE very important fact has been omitted from the short biography which appears in the first part of the translation of Einstein's own book, "The Theory of Relativity" (Henry Holt & Co.). It is a bit of personal history that would have special significance in both the American and English editions. It is news that will put Alderman Falconer in even a sorrier plight. The truth is that Einstein not only stood aloof from the eighty-three German scientists and men of letters who issued that stupendously dishonest manifesto in 1914, but furthermore signed a formal protest against it in company with the few others who could not sell their souls. It is said that as a consequence he bore the brunt of bitter attacks and threats of mob violence from his enraged students.

In the preface it is interesting to note Prof. Einstein's decidedly human touch. He very evidently believes his theory can be understood by many more than those reputed "six" of the world's scientists. He says, in part: "The present book is intended, so far as possible, to give an exact insight into the theory of relativity to those readers who, from a general scientific and philosophical point of view, are interested in the theory, but who are not conversant with the mathematical apparatus of theoretical physics. The work presumes a standard of education corresponding to that of a university matriculation examination, and, despite the shortness of the book, a fair amount of patience and force of will on the part of the reader. The author has spared himself no pains in his endeavor to present the main ideas in the simplest and most intelligible form. . . . [And in closing] May the book bring some one a few happy hours of suggestive thought!"

That last sentence endears the man to us—is so modest and so suggestive of the joy he himself has found and believes others may find in these scientific investigations. In that preface he holds out an encouraging hand to all of us who have as much education as he specifies, and yet who have seriously doubted our own capacity to understand his theory. It is a challenge to us to exert "a fair amount of patience and force of will" if we would understand this momentous theory, as he himself has explained it.

Now that Einstein has come among us and showed himself decidedly human, perhaps we won't be quite so afraid of his theory. Before his coming the reviewer for one regarded him as a phenomenal personification of the 'nth power of knowledge, and did not even dare to endow him in imagination with the ordinary features and attributes of a human being. He was nothing but the embodiment of a vast understandable theory. Now we discover that he is a human being as well as a genius.

Arnold Bennett on everything

THINGS THAT HAVE INTERESTED ME. By Arnold Bennett. George H. Doran Company.

Consisting of over 120 chapters, or headings, this book presents an opportunity of having a little chat with Mr. Arnold Bennett every day for four months, ranging through prize fights, gambling at Monte Carlo, The Rosenkavalier, Psychology of Russia, English Society in the Nineties, Balzac's Technique, Interpreting the Gospel, Caillaux, the Jockey Club, the Siege of Paris, Morphia, Foch, Rostand, Sex Equality, the Guitreys, Henry James, the League of Nations in 1920, James Gordon Bennett, Hardships of the Ruling Class, and so on and so on. And he is always interesting, thanks to a style at once lucid, pointed and spontaneous. He gives many instances of wit that is peculiarly British. He says, for instance, discussing the opera: "Stout sopranos are not criminals—they are victims who fight in vain against their unkind fate."

Two Yorkshiremen were discussing their respective mayors, very grand persons in England. One said:

"Our Mayor wears a bl——dy great chain."

"We let our old beggar go loose," said the other.

He gives this classic verbatim record of the customary remarks of a British orchestral conductor, which sounds very like Sir Thomas Beecham, though he names no names:

"Don't handicap the crescendo. . . . I want a savage staccato. . . . Weep, Mr. Parker; weep. . . . That's jolly. That's jolly. . . . Now, Sidedrums, assert yourself." He said, persistent in getting an effect: "Sorry to tease you, gentlemen." He went on: "Now, I want a sudden exquisite hush. . . . Everybody must be shadowy together. . . . Let the pizzicato act as a sort of springboard to the passage. . . . Gentlemen of the first fiddles, this isn't a bees' wedding; it's something elemental."

He relates an appeal to Providence during an air raid over the Midlands. A man we will call Mr. Bigsby was staying in a house inhabited by five women. In the excitement one of the women dropped on her knees and began to pray. She appealed to Providence with great apparent sincerity, then suddenly jumped up and cried: "Oh, dear, this is no good. I'm going to fetch Mr. Bigsby," and ran out of the room.

On the subject of "Style," Mr. Bennett takes to task the writer of the phrase, "The King and Queen were present at a first night in a London theatre last evening for the initial time of their reign." He thinks the word "initial" quite out of place. Yet we find the author himself a few pages later speaking of Sir William Orpen's portrait of Mr. Winston Churchill as "an extremely accomplished piece of *representational* art."

Mr. Bennett's art is well illustrated in his sketches of Foch and Ludendorff:

"Foch is the one man in Europe who no doubt is saying quietly to himself: 'I've done it. I've done the trick.' For the entire situation today is built upon a couple of days' work in July, 1918, and the creative strategy of one man. If the Germans had not been outmanœuvred the psychology of the whole world would have been utterly different.

"Hindenburg threw down his newspaper and walked out of a little cafe in a provincial town and crossed the German Empire to kill a hundred thousand Russians in a day. He did it perfectly. The rest of his reputation was meretricious. Nothing could stop Ludendorff from climbing over him. Ludendorff has about forty times more brains than Hindenburg. He did all but become one of the greatest generals of all time. Then it was discovered that he was lavishing on war highly distinguished gifts which Heaven had meant for the gaming saloon. He was indeed a very finished poker-player—who lost. He showed a countenance calculated to persuade nearly everybody that 'three of a kind' was a 'royal flush.' Unhappily for him, some one said to him at the wrong moment: 'I'll see you.' And that was the end of Ludendorff as one of the greatest generals of all time."

After seeing Carpentier knock out the British champion, Beckett, to the amazement and grief of the entire British sporting world, he moralizes on what he had seen:

"Was the show worthy of the time and talents lavished on its preparation, worthy of the tradition, of the prowess, of the fostering newspapers, of Mr. Cochran? It was. Was it a moral show? It was. Was it an aesthetic show? It was. Did it uplift? It did. Did it degrade? It did not. Was it offensive? No. Ought the noble art continue? It ought. I had been deeply interested."

Bennett lived five years in Paris, and dabbled in art. Hence he was immensely flattered when the French water colorist Pierre Laprade said on inspecting some of his work: "Monsieur, you have three times too much cleverness, and your work is utterly without interest." He was enraptured that he had three times too much cleverness. He produced one masterpiece—which his American publisher appropriated and used, as a book covering, in colors, for one of his books. Of the French and Montmartre he writes:

"The waiters were human; they are inhuman in London. The concierges were fiends, but they were human fiends. Virtue and wickedness were equally apparent and equally candid. Hypocrisy alone was absent. Within a mile of the Rue d'Aumale—austere, silent, distinguished, icy, beautiful—I could find more intellectual honesty than in the whole of England."

But having a "most disturbing suspicion" that he was losing touch with England and that his literary work would suffer, he departed from Paris, and says:

"And I saw the tail of the last van as it rounded the corner. And I gave up the keys so bright with use. And I definitely quitted the land where eating and love are understood, where art and learning are honored, where women well dressed and without illusions are not rare, where thrift flourishes, where politeness is practised, and where politics are shameful and grotesque. I prefer to live in England and regret France than to live in France and regret England. I think the permanent exile is a pathetic figure. I suppose I have a grim passion for England. But I know why France is the darling of the nations."

His last and shortest chapter is called "The Transatlantic View." The wife of an American official, staggered and delighted at the spectacle of a very great munitions factory in Britain, said "I can just feel the monarchical principle pulsating through all this effort." Bennett, even more than Wells, is a cockney product. We prefer Bennett, since he is entirely free from speculation about the universe.